AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please add claims 10-15, and amend claims 1, 2, and 6 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An elongating method of an optical fiber base material, wherein

in an elongating process of elongating an optical fiber base material by heating the optical fiber base material in a heating furnace so that a diameter of the optical fiber base material is reduced,

before the optical fiber base material having a distorted portion is elongated from an end thereof, [a] the distorted portion of the optical fiber base material is corrected by being heated to be softened in the heating furnace such that the distorted portion is corrected by its own weight.

2. (Currently Amended) The elongating method according to claim 1, wherein when the optical fiber base material is heated to be softened in the heating furnace, a heater to heat the heating furnace is heated to a temperature in a range of 1,800 °C to 1,900 °C[°].

3. (Original) The elongating method according to claim 1, wherein the elongation is started, after the optical fiber base material is attached to a hanging mechanism so as to be hung in the heating furnace, the distorted portion of the optical fiber base material is heated to be softened, and a difference between an elongation axis and one of the optical fiber base material and a dummy rod attached to the optical fiber base material is reduced to be no more than a predetermined value.

4. (Original) The elongating method according to claim 3, wherein the elongation is started, after a difference between the elongation axis and an end of one of the optical fiber base material and the dummy rod attached to the optical fiber base material is reduced to be 10 mm or less, when the judgment whether the difference between the elongation axis and one of the

optical fiber base material and the dummy rod attached to the optical fiber base material is no more than the predetermined value is made.

5. (Original) The elongating method according to claim 3, wherein the optical fiber base material is hung in such a manner that the distorted portion is positioned lower and the elongation axis is substantially parallel to a plumb direction.

6. (Currently Amended) The elongating method according to claim 3, further comprising:

examining whether the optical fiber base material is to be hung in the heating furnace without being in contact with the heating furnace, before the optical fiber base material is hung.

7. (Previously Presented) The elongating method according to claim 3, wherein the difference is detected by using a noncontact position detecting apparatus.

8. (Original) The elongating method according to claim 7, wherein the noncontact position detecting apparatus is one of a laser measuring device and an image processing apparatus.

9. (Previously Presented) The elongating method according to claim 4, wherein the difference is detected by using noncontact position detecting apparatus.

10. (New) A method of elongating an optical fiber base material, comprising:

correcting a distorted portion of the optical fiber base material by heating the optical fiber base material to soften the distorted portion, the distorted portion being softened such that the distorted portion is corrected by its own weight; and

after the correcting of the distorted portion, elongating the optical fiber base material from an end thereof.

11. (New) The method of elongating according to claim 10, wherein a difference between an elongation axis and one of the optical fiber base material and a dummy rod attached to the optical fiber base material is reduced to be no more than a predetermined value.

12. (New) The method of elongating according to claim 11, wherein the difference is reduced to be 10mm or less.

13. (New) The method of elongating according to claim 10, further comprising:

hanging the optical fiber base material in a heating furnace for the heating of the optical fiber base material such that the optical fiber base material and the heating furnace do not make physical contact.

14. (New) The method of elongating according to claim 11, wherein the difference is detected by using a charge-coupled device camera.

15. (New) The method of elongating according to claim 10, wherein the optical fiber base material comprises an outer diameter of 40 mm to 180 mm.

16. (New) The method of elongating according to claim 10, wherein the optical fiber base material comprises quartz glass.

17. (New) The method of elongating according to claim 11, wherein an elongation support

rod made of silicon nitride ceramics is attached to the dummy rod.

18. (New) The elongating method according to claim 13, wherein a dummy rod projects from the heating furnace.

19. (New) The elongating method according to claim 11, wherein the charge-coupled device camera measures a position of the elongation axis on an image in advance, and obtains an image of the dummy rod in a direction perpendicular to the elongation axis of the optical fiber base material.